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*100th Bombardment Group*

Personal Report on the Regensburg  
Mission, 17 August 1943

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HEADQUARTERS  
100th Bombardment Group (H)  
A.P.O. 624

U.S. Army Station 189,  
28 August, 1945.

SUBJECT: Personal report on the REGENSBURG mission, 17 August, 1945.

TO : Commanding Officer, 100th Bombardment Group (H).

1. This report does not attempt to render a complete summary of the mission. It is merely an eyewitness account of what was seen by the undersigned, together with certain recommendations pertinent thereto, during an ordeal in which the 100th Group fought its way to the target through fierce and prolonged enemy fighter attacks and accurately bombed a vital target.

2. When the 100th Group crossed the coast of Holland south of The Hague at 1005 hours at our base altitude of 17,000 feet, I was well situated to watch the proceedings, being copilot in the lead ship of the last element of the high squadron. The Group had all of its 11 B-17's tucked in tightly and was within handy supporting distance of the 95th Group, ahead of us at 18,000 feet. We were the last and lowest of the seven groups of the 4th Air Division that were visible ahead on a south-east course, forming a long, loose-linked chain in the bright sunlight -- too long, it seemed. Wide gaps separated the three combat wings. As I sat there in the tail-end element of that many miles long procession, gauging the distance to the lead group, I had the long-some foreboding that might come to the last man about to run a gauntlet lined with spiked clubs. The premonition was well founded.

At 1017 hours, near Woensdrecht, I saw the first flak blossoms out in our vicinity, light and inaccurate. A few minutes later, approximately 10:25 hours, two FW-190's appeared at 10,000 foot level and whizzed through the formation ahead of us in a frontal attack, nicking two B-17's of the 95th Group in the wings and breaking away beneath us in half-rolls. Smoke immediately trailed from both B-17's, but they held their stations. As the fighters passed us at a high rate of closure, the guns of our group went into action. The pungent smell of burnt powder filled our cockpit, and the B-17 trembled to the recoil of nose and ball-turret guns. I saw pieces fly off the wing of one of the fighters before they passed from view.

Here was early action. The members of the crew sensed trouble. There was something desperate about the way those two fighters came in fast and right out of their climb without any preliminaries. For a few seconds the interphone was busy with exclamations: "Lead 'em more" ... "short bursts" ... "don't throw rounds away" ... "there'll be more along in a minute".

Three minutes later, the gunners reported fighters climbing up from around the clock, singly and in pairs, both FW-190's and Me-109's. This was only my fourth raid, but from what I could see on my side, it looked like many fighters for sound health. A coordinated attack followed, with the enemy fighters coming in from slightly above, the 9 and 3 o'clock attackers breaching from about level, and the rear attackers from slightly below. Every gun from every B-17 in our group and the 95th were firing, criss-crossing our patch of sky with tracers to catch the time-fuse cannon shell puffs that squirted from the wings of the Jimmy single-seaters. I would estimate that 75% of our fire was inaccurate, falling astern of the target -- particularly the fire from hand-held guns. Nevertheless, both sides got hurt in this clash.



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with two B-17's from our own squadron and one from the 96th Group falling out of formation on fire with crews bailing out, and several fighters heading off for the deck in flames or with their ~~unconscious~~ pilots lingering behind under dirty yellow parachutes. Our group leader, Major John Kidd, pulled us up nearer to the 95th Group for mutual support.

I knew that we were already in a lively fight. What I didn't know was that the real fight, the onslaught of Luftwaffe 30 mm cannon shells, hadn't really begun. A few minutes later we absorbed the first wave of a hailstorm of individual fighter attacks that were to engulf us clear to the target. The ensuing action was so rapid and varied that I cannot give a chronological account of it. Instead, I will attempt a fragmentary report of salient details that even now give me a dry mouth and an unpleasant sensation in the stomach to recall. The sight was fantastic and surpassed fiction.

It was at 1011 hours, over Japan, that I looked out of my copilot's window after a short lull and saw two whole squadrons, 12 Me-109's and 11 P-51's, climbing parallel to us. The first squadron had reached our level and was pulling ahead to turn into us and the second was not far behind. Several thousand feet below us were many more fighters, with their noses cocked at maximum climb. Over the inter-phone came reports of an equal number of enemy aircraft deploying on the other side. For the first time, I noticed an Me-110 sitting out of range on our right. He was to stay with us all the way to the target, apparently reporting our position to fresh squadrons waiting for us down the road. At the sight of all these fighters, I had the distinct feeling of being trapped -- that the Hun was tipped off, or at least had guessed our destination and was waiting for us. No P-47's were visible. The life expectancy of the 100th Group suddenly seemed very short, since it had already appeared that the fighters were picking up the preceding groups, with the exception of the 95th, in order to take a cut at us.

Swinging their yellow noses around in a wide U-turn, the 12-ship squadron of Me-109's came in from 12 to 1 o'clock in pairs and in fours and the main event was on.

A shining silver object sailed past over our right wing. I recognized it as a main exit door. Seconds later, a dark object came hurtling through the formation, barely missing several props. It was a man, clapping his knees to his head, revolving like a diver in a triple somersault. I didn't see his chute open.

A B-17 turned gradually out of the formation to the right, maintaining altitude. In a split second, the B-17 completely disappeared in a brilliant explosion, from which the only remains were four small balls of fire, the fuel tanks, which were quickly consumed as they fell earthward.

Our airplane was endangered by various debris. Emergency hatches, exit doors, prematurely opened parachutes, bodies, and assorted fragments of B-17's and Hun fighters breezed past us in the slip-stream.

I watched two fighters explode not far beneath, disappearing in sheets of orange flame, B-17's dropping out in every stage of distress, from engines on fire to control surfaces shot away, friendly and enemy parachutes floating down, and, on the green carpet far behind us, numerous funeral pyres of smoke from fallen fighters, marking our trail.

On we flew through the stream wake of a desperate air battle, where disintegrating aircraft were commonplace and 60 chutes in the air at one time were hardly worth a second look.

I watched a B-17 turn slowly out to the right with its cockpit a mass of ~~flaming~~ flames. The copilot crawled out of his window, held on with one hand, reached back for his chute, buckled it on, let go and was whisked back into the horizontal stabilizer. I believe the impact killed him. His chute didn't open.



Ten minutes, twenty minutes, thirty minutes, and still no let-up in the attacks. The fighters queued up like a breadline and let us have it. Each second of time had a cannon shell in it. The strain of being a clay duck in the wrong end of that aerial shooting gallery became almost intolerable as the minutes accumulated towards the first hour.

Our B-17 shook steadily with the fire of its .50's and the air inside was heavy with smoke. It was cold in the cockpit, but when I looked across at it, Thomas Murphy, the pilot, and a good one, sweat was pouring off his forehead and over his oxygen mask. He turned the controls over to me for a while. It was a blessed relief to concentrate on holding station in formation instead of watching those over-lusting fighters boxing in. It was possible to forget the fighters. Then the top-turret gunner's twin machine guns would pound away a foot above my head, giving a realistic imitation of cannon-shells exploding in the cockpit, while I gave an even better imitation of a man jumping six inches out of his seat.

A B-17 of the 35th Group, with its right Tokyo tanks on fire, dropped back to about 200 feet above our right wing and stayed there while 7 of the crew successively bailed out. Four went out the bomb-bay and executed delayed jumps, on bailed from the nose, opened his chute prematurely and nearly fouled the tail. Another went out the left waist-gun opening, delaying his chute opening for a safe interval. The tailgunner dropped out of his hatch, apparently pulling the ripcord before he was clear of the ship. His chute opened instantaneously, barely missing the tail, and jerked him so hard that both his knees came off. He hung limp in the harness, whereas the others had shown immediate signs of life after their chutes opened, shifting around in the harness. The B-17 then dropped back in a medium spiral and I did not see the pilots leave. I saw it just before it passed from view, several thousand feet below us, with its right wing a solid sheet of yellow flame.

After we had been under constant attack for a solid hour, it appeared certain that the 100th Group was faced with annihilation. Seven of our group had been shot down, the sky was still mottled with rising fighters and it was only 11:30 hours, with target-time still 25 minutes away. I doubt if a man in the group visualized the possibility of our getting such further with <sup>out</sup> loss. I knew that I had long since mentally accepted the fact of death, and that it was simply a question of the next second or the next minute. I learned first-hand that a man can resign himself to the certainty of death without becoming panicky. Our group fire power was reduced 55%, ammunition was running low. Our tail-guns had to be replenished from another gun station. Gunners were becoming exhausted and nerve-tortured from the prolonged strain, and there was an awareness on everybody's part that something must have gone wrong. We had been the aiming point for what seemed like most of the Luftwaffe and we fully expected to find the rest of it piled for us at the target.

Fighter tactics were running fairly true to form. Frontal attackers hit the low squadron and lead squadron, while rear attackers went for the high. The manner of their attacks showed that some pilots were old-timers, some amateurs, and that all knew pretty definitely where we were going and were inspired with a fanatical determination to stop us before we got there. The old-timers came in on frontal attacks with a noticeably slower rate of closure, apparently throttled back, obtaining greater accuracy than those that bolted through us side out. They did some nice shooting at ranges of 500 or more yards, and in many cases seemed able to time their thrusts so as to catch the top and ball turret gunners engaged with rear and side attacks. Less experienced pilots were pressing attacks home to 250 yards and less to get hits, offering point-



-4-

blank targets on the break-away, firing long bursts of 20 seconds, and, in some cases, actually pulling up instead of going down and out. Several PW pilots pulled off some first rate deflection shooting on side attacks against the high group, then raked the low group on the break-away out of a side-slip, keeping the nose cocked up in the turn to prolong the period the formation was in their sights.

I observed what I believe was an attempt at air-to-air bombing, although I didn't see the bombs dropped. A patch of 75 to 100 grey-white bursts, smaller than flak bursts, appeared simultaneously at our level, off to one side.

One B-17 dropped out on fire and put its wheels down while the crew bailed. Three Me-109's circled it closely, but held their fire, apparently ensuring that no one stayed in the ship to try for home. I saw Hun fighters hold their fire even when being shot at by a shamshup B-17 from which the crew were bailing out.

Near the I.P., at 1150 hours, one hour and a half after the first of at least 200 individual fighter attacks, the pressure eased off, although hostiles were still in the vicinity. We turned at the I.P. at 1154 hours with 14 B-17's left in the group, two of which were badly crippled. They dropped out soon after bombing the target and headed for Switzerland, one of them, "042," carrying Col. William Kennedy as tail-gunner. #4 engine was on fire, but not out of control. Major William Veal, leader of the high squadron, received a cannon shell in his #5 engine just before the start of the bombing run and went in to the target with the prop feathered.

Weather over the target, as on the entire trip, was ideal. Flak was negligible. The group got its bombs away promptly on the leader. As we turned and headed for the Alps, I got a grim satisfaction out of seeing a rectangular column of smoke rising straight up from the Me-109 ships, with only one burst over in the town of Regensburg.

The rest of the trip was a marked anti-climax. A few more fighters pecked at us on the way to the Alps. A town in the Brenner Pass tossed up a lone burst of futile flak. Colli LeMay, who had taken excellent care of us all the way, circled the air division over Lake Garda long enough to give the cripples a chance to join the family, and we were on our way toward the Mediterranean in a gradual descent. About 25 fighters on the ground at Verona stayed on the ground. The prospect of ditching as we approached Rome, short of fuel, and the sight of other B-17's falling into the drink, seemed trivial matters after the vicious nightmare of the long trip across southern Germany. We felt the reaction of men who had not expected to see another sunset.

At 1815 hours, with red lights showing on all our fuel tanks in my ship, the seven B-17's of the group who were still in formation circled over Bortoux and landed in the dust. Our crew was unscratched. Sole damage to the airplane: a bit of ventilation around the tail from flak and 20 mm shells. We slept on the hard ground under the wings of our B-17, but the good earth felt softer than a silk pillow.



5

5. Recommendations: a. That combat wings always comprise three groups, spaced close enough for mutual support, on deep penetrations and that the interval between combat wings be as close as is flyable in order to cut down the over-all distance from the head to the tail of the column. This should result in a more even distribution of fighter attacks with lower average loss per group. Enemy staffeln near their fuel limits did not try to catch preceding groups but concentrated on the tail of the long column we presented on the Regensburg mission.

b. That fighter escorts give particular attention to protection of rear groups on deep penetrations. I would judge that 17,000 feet, our base altitude, was too low -- an awkward altitude for P-47's -- even if fighter escort had covered us, which it didn't.

c. That emphasis on deflection shooting on the part of our gunners be continued and intensified. A B-17 group can put out tremendous fire power, and the 100th Group did some accurate shooting, but too many of the gunners were firing on targets that had just left.

d. That groups expecting to operate on the return trip from North African airbases carry with them engine, gun and radio compartment covers for protection against dust and mud.

e. That continued thought be given to further protective measures in the formation for the low squadron, which in our group, at least, was the A.P. for frontal attacks.

f. That better exchange of information be provided between air divisions. Even several days after a mission, groups in the 4th Air Division have little knowledge of what happened to the 1st Air Division, except through hearsay.

g. That 30 combat missions be reduced to 25 for crews that have engaged in deep penetrations. It takes a rugged constitution to stand up to missions like Regensburg and even the toughest crew members were badly shaken by nearly two hours under persistent attack. The less phlegmatic were already potential candidates for the rest home when we landed in Africa. My four previous missions, in one of which our bombardier was killed, were pieces of cake in comparison to the 11 hour Regensburg show, and I doubt if 20 such normal missions would take the same amount out of a man as one must to Regensburg.

4. Awards: The following suggested awards are recommended to the attention of the Group Commander.

a. Distinguished Flying Cross: To every combat crew member of the 100th Group who participated in the Regensburg mission, for courage and achievement in enabling the group to reach and successfully bomb a vital target against odds that could easily have resulted in 100% loss had it not been for the outstanding air discipline of the group as a whole. A tight formation was held, in spite of reshuffling of the group from consecutive losses, and cool judgment and self-control were exercised by individual crews under prolonged strain.

b. Distinguished Service Cross:

✓ Major John Kidd, group leader, for heroism and skill in his leadership of the group to target and final destination. This 24-year-old officer carried out superbly an assignment above and beyond the call of duty for an officer of his age and experience. He had had only three previous combat missions.

✓ Major William Veal, leader of the high squadron, for heroism and skillful leadership of his squadron. Just before turning in to the bombing run, a cannon shell hit his #3 engine, setting it on fire, and oxygen failure occurred. Instead of turning toward the safety of the Swiss border, approximately 65 miles distant, Major Veal feathered his #3 prop, a sure tip-off to the



-6-

fighters in the vicinity, in order to regain position in the formation. He successfully bombed the target, extinguished the engine fire, crossed the Alps and several hundred miles of Mediterranean and reached base in North Africa, all on three engines.

c. Lt. Wolff, a wing man in the lead squadron. The under-signed did not have an opportunity to interview Lt. Wolff or his crew, but observed his ship hobbling along with the formation all the way to North Africa in spite of what looked like the worst battle damage of any airplane in the group. Appropriate investigation and award is recommended.

d. CONGRESSIONAL MEDAL OF HONOR:

(D.S.C.)

Major Gale W. Cleven, leader of the low squadron. Throughout approximately two hours of constant fighter attack, Major Cleven's squadron was the principal focal point of the enemy's fire. Early in the encounter, south of Antwerp, he lost his entire second element of three B-17's, yet maintained his vulnerable and exposed position in the formation rigidly in order to keep his guns uncovered.

Approximately 30 minutes before reaching the target his airplane received the following battle damage. A 20 mm cannon shell penetrated the right side of the airplane and exploded beneath pilot, damaging the electrical system and injuring the top turret gunner in the leg. A second 20 mm shell entered the radio compartment, killing the radio operator, who bled to death with his legs severed above the knees. A third 20 mm shell entered the left side of the nose, tearing out a section of plexiglass about two feet square, tore away the right hand nose-gun installation and injured the bombardier in the head and shoulder. A fourth 20 mm shell penetrated the right wing into the fuselage and shattered the hydraulic system, releasing fluid all around the cockpit. A fifth 20 mm shell entered the cabin roof and severed the rudder cables to one side of the rudder. A sixth 20 mm cannon shell exploded in the #3 engine, destroying all engine controls. The engine caught fire and lost its power, but the fire eventually died out.

Confronted with structural damage, partial loss of control, fire in the air and serious injuries to personnel, and faced with fresh waves of fighters still rising to the attack, Major Cleven had every justification for abandoning ship. His crew, some of them comparatively inexperienced youngsters, were preparing to bail out, since no other course appeared open. The copilot pleaded repeatedly with Major Cleven to abandon ship. Major Cleven's reply at this critical juncture, although the odds were overwhelmingly against him, was as follows: "You son of a bitch. You sit there and take it." These strong words were heard over the interphone and had a magical effect on the crew. They stuck to their guns. The airplane continued to the target, bombed it and reached base in North Africa.

Sgt. Ferroggiaro, left waist gunner and veteran of the war in China in 1932 and of 7 months at the front in Spain in 1938, voiced the opinion of the crew to the under-signed when he stated that the completion of the mission was solely due to the extraordinary heroism and inspired determination of Major Cleven. The under-signed believes that under the circumstances which obtained, Major Cleven's actions were far above and beyond the call of duty, and that the skill, courage and strength of will displayed by him as airplane and squadron commander in the face of hopeless odds have seldom, if ever, been surpassed in the annals of the Army Air Forces.

5. It is requested that should any portion of this report be used for public relations purposes, the name of the under-signed be strictly withheld, and that reference be made only to "an officer."

W. L. Lay Jr.  
Lt. Col. A.C.S.



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2. When the 100th Group crossed the coast of Holland south of The Hague at 1008 hours at our base altitude of 17,000 feet, I was well situated to watch the proceedings, being copilot in the lead ship of the last element of the high squadron. The Group had all of its 21 B-17's tucked in tightly and was within handy supporting distance of the 95th Group, ahead of us at 18,000 feet. We were the last and lowest of the seven groups of the 4th Air Division that were visible ahead on a south-east course, forming a long, loose-linked chain in the bright sunlight--too long, it seemed. Wide gaps separated the three combat wings. As I sat there in the tail-end element of that many miles long procession, gauging the distance to the lead group, I had the lonesome foreboding that might come to the last man about to run a gauntlet lined with spiked clubs. The premonition was well founded.

At 1017 hours, near Woensdrecht, I saw the first flak blossom out in our vicinity, light and inaccurate. A few minutes later, approximately 1025 hours, two FW-190's appeared at 1 o'clock level and whizzed through the formation ahead of us in a frontal attack, nicking two B-17's of the 95th Group in the wings and breaking away beneath us in half-rolls. Smoke immediately trailed from both B-17's, but they held their stations. As the fighters passed us at a high rate of closure, the guns of our group went into action. The pungent smell of burnt powder filled our cockpit, and the B-17 trembled to the recoil of nose and ball-turret guns. I saw pieces fly off the wing and one of the fighters before they passed from view.

Here was early action. The members of the crew sensed trouble. There was something desperate about the way those two fighters came in fast right out of their climb without any preliminaries. For a few seconds the interphone was busy with admonitions: "Lead 'em more"... "short bursts"... "don't throw rounds away"... "there'll be more along in a minute".

Three minutes later, the gunners reported fighters climbing up from all around the clock, singly and in pairs, both FW-190's and Me-109's. This was only my fourth raid, but from what I could see on my side, it looked like too many fighters for sound health. A coordinated attack followed, with the head-on fighters coming in from slightly above, the 9 and 3 o'clock attackers approaching from about level, and the rear attackers from slightly below. Every gun from every B-17 in our group and the 95th were firing, criss-crossing our patch of sky with tracers to match the time-fuze cannon shell puffs that squirted from the wings of the Jerry single-seaters. I would estimate that 75% of our fire was inaccurate, falling astern of the target--particularly the fire from hand-held guns. Nevertheless, both sides got hurt in this clash.



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I knew that we were already in a lively fight. What I didn't know was that the real fight, the anschluss of Luftwaffe 20 mm cannon shells, hadn't really begun. A few minutes later we absorbed the first wave of a hailstorm of individual fighter attacks that were to engulf us clear to the target. The ensuing action was so rapid and varied that I cannot give a chronological account of it. Instead, I will attempt a fragmentary report of salient details that even now give me a dry mouth and an unpleasant sensation in the stomach to recall. The sight was fantastic and surpassed fiction.

It was at 1041 hours, over Hapen, that I looked out of my copilot's window after a short lull and saw two whole squadrons, 12 Me-109's and 11 FW-190's, climbing parallel to us. The first squadron had reached our level and was pulling ahead to turn into us and the second was not far behind. Several thousand feet below us were many more fighters, with their noses cocked at maximum climb. Over the inter-phone came reports of an equal number of enemy aircraft deploying on the other side. For the first time, I noticed an Me-110 sitting out of range on our right. He was to stay with us all the way to the target, apparently reporting our position to fresh squadrons waiting for us down the road. At the sight of all these fighters, I had the distinct feeling of being trapped--that the Hun was tipped off, or at least had guessed our destination and was waiting for us. No P-47's were visible. The life expectancy of the 100th Group suddenly seemed very short, since it had already appeared IX that the fighters were passing up the preceding groups, with the exception of the 95th, in order to take a cut at us.

Swinging their yellow noses around in a wide U-turn, the 12-ship squadron of Me-109's came in from 12 to 2 o'clock in pairs and in fours and the main event was on.

A shining silver object sailed past over our right wing. I recognized it as a main exit door. Seconds later, a dark object came hurtling through the formation, barely missing several props. It was a man, clasping his knees to his head, revolving like a diver in a triple somersault. I didn't see his 'chute open.

A B-17 turned gradually out of the formation to the right, maintaining altitude. In a split second, the B-17 completely disappeared in a brilliant explosion, from which the only remains were four small balls of fire, the fuel HME tanks, which were quickly consumed as they fell earthward.

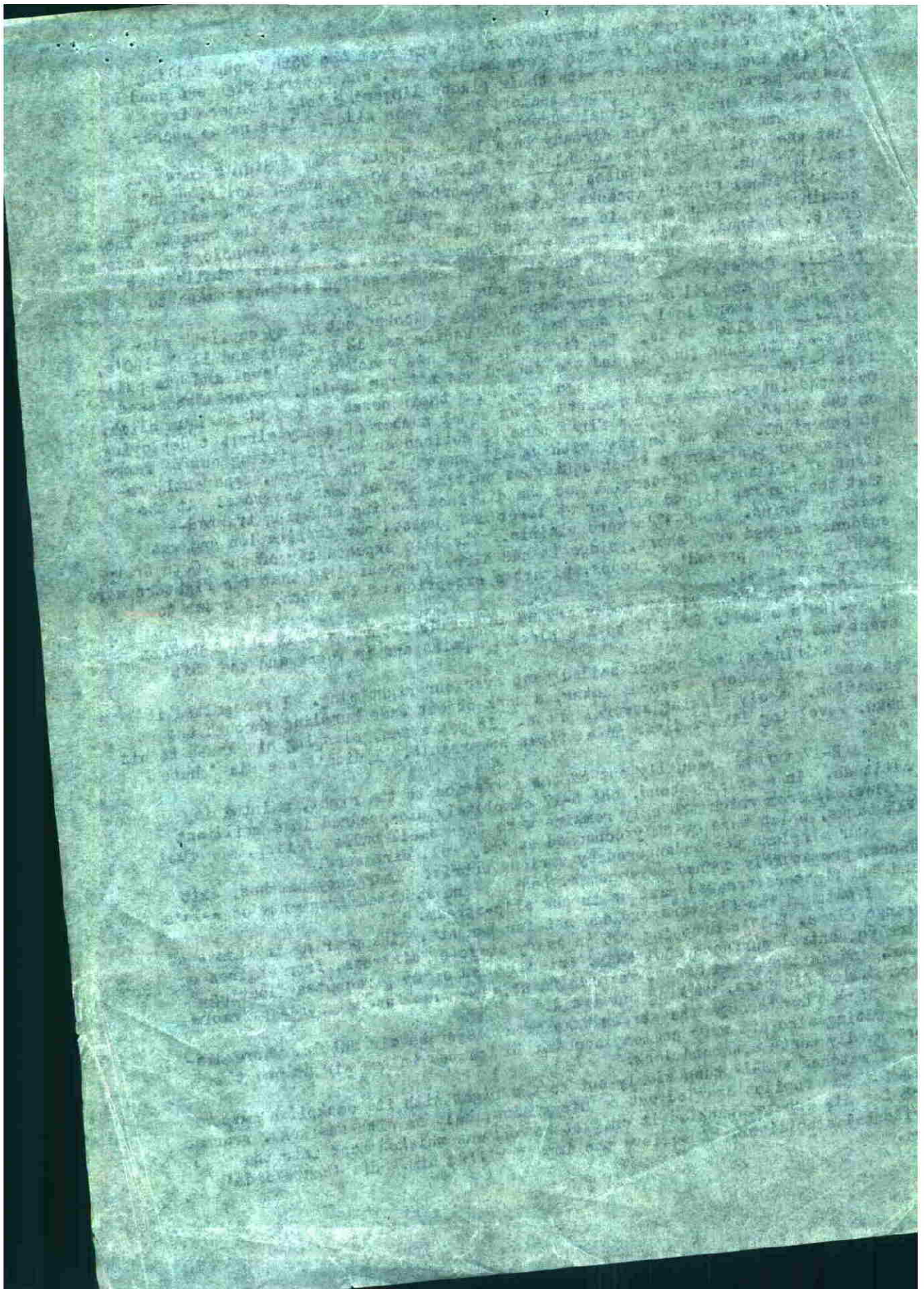
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I watched a B-17 turn slowly out to the right with its cockpit a mass of flames. The copilot crawled out of his window, held on with one hand, reached back for his 'chute, buckled it on, let go and was whisked back into the horizontal stabiliser. I believe the impact killed him. His 'chute didn't open.







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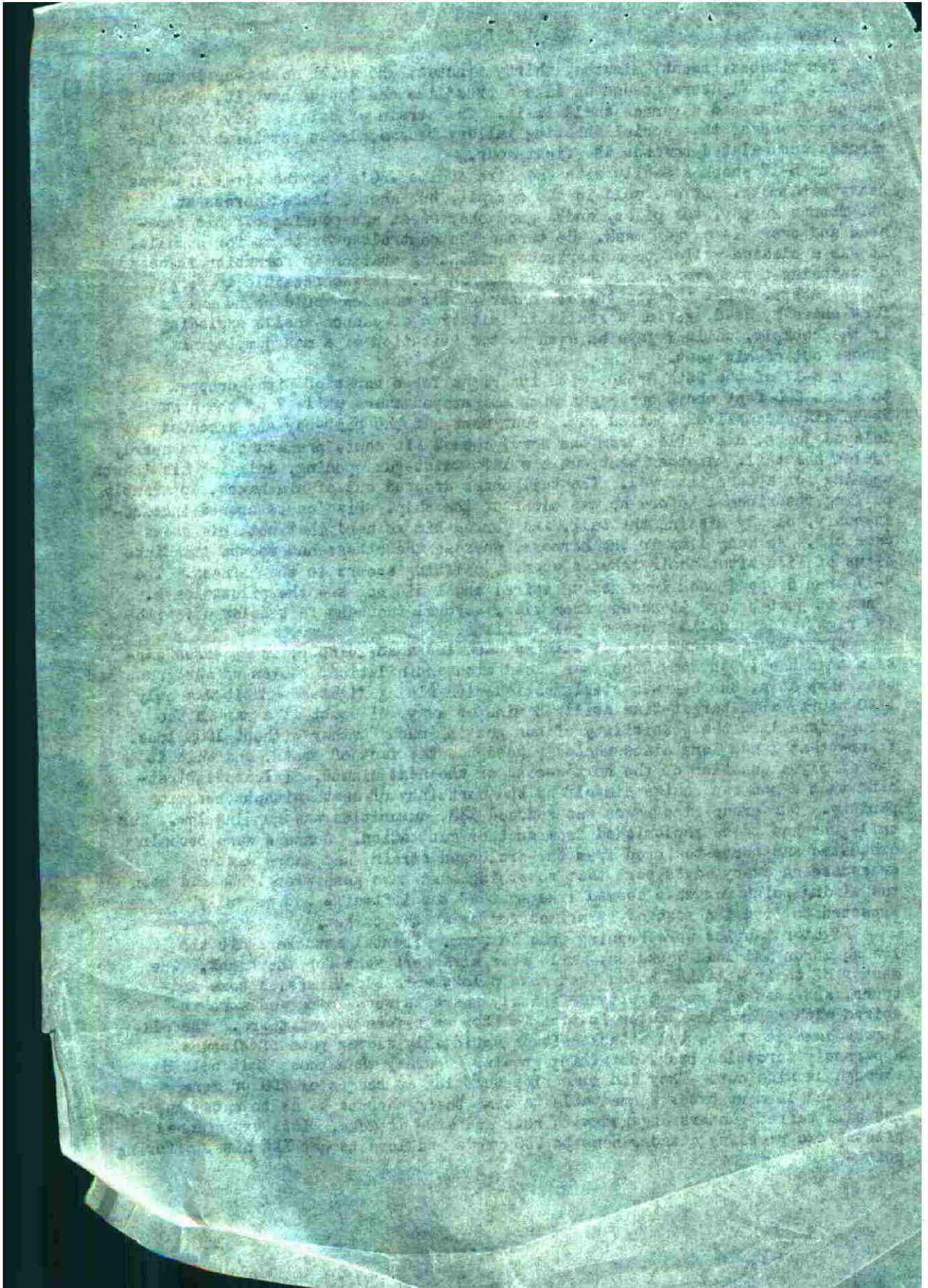
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One B-17 dropped out on fire and put its wheels down while the crew bailed out. Three ME-109's circled it closely, but held their fire, apparently ensuring that no one stayed in the ship to try for home. I saw Hun fighters hold their fire even when being shot at by a B-17 from which the crew were bailing out.

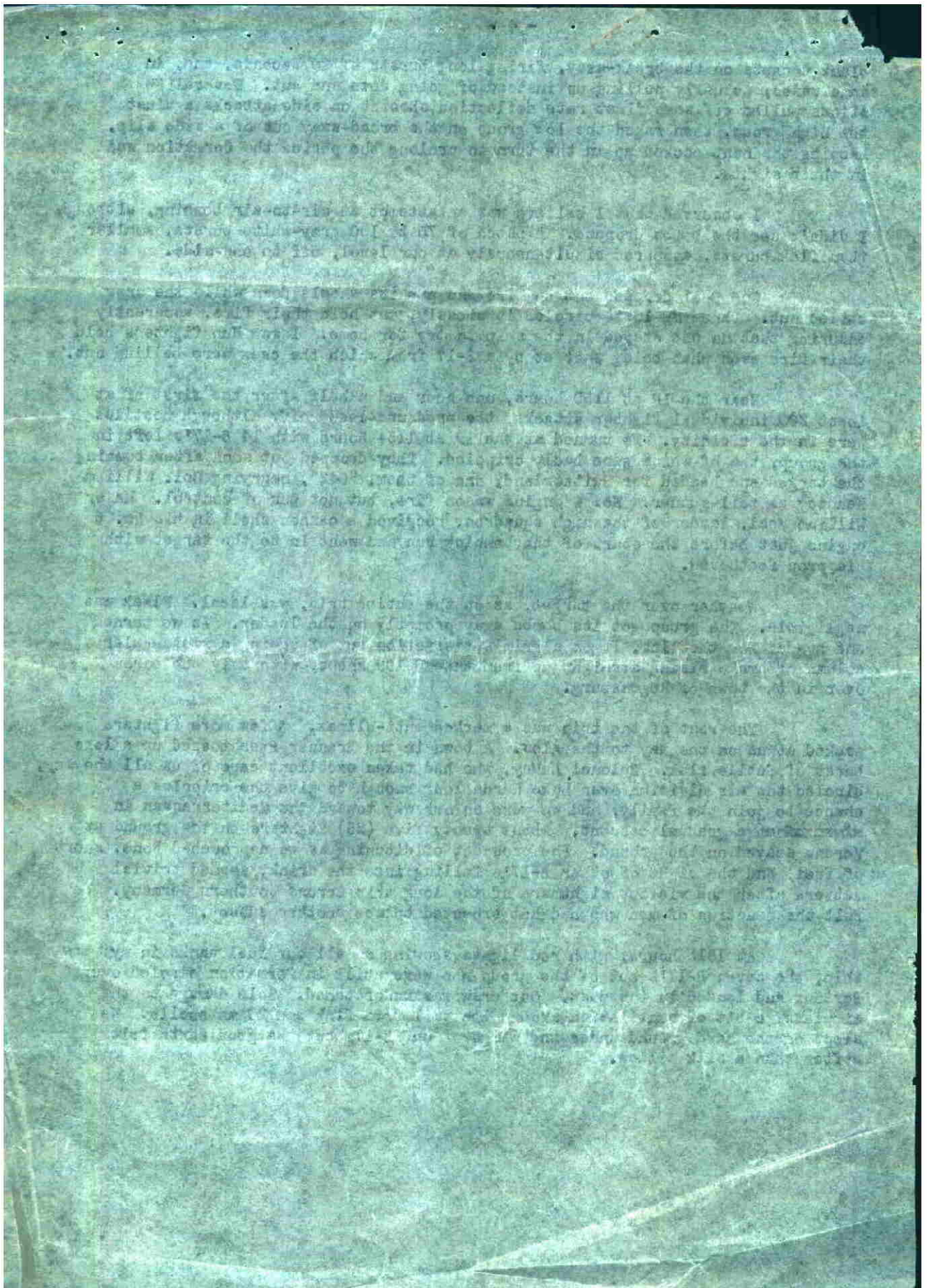
Near the IP at 1150 hours, one hour and a half after the first of at least 200 individual fighter attacks, the pressure eased off, although hostiles were in the vicinity. We turned at the IP at 1154 hours with 14 B-17's left in the group, two of which were badly crippled. They dropped out soon after bombing the target and headed for Switzerland, one of them, "042", carrying Col. William Kennedy as tail-gunner. No. 4 engine was on fire, but not out of control. Major William Veal, leader of the high squadron, received a cannon shell in his No. 5 engine just before the start of the bombing run and went in to the target with his prop feathered.

Weather over the target, as on the entire trip, was ideal. Flak was negligible. The group got its bombs away promptly on the leader. As we turned and headed for the Alps, I got a grim satisfaction out of seeing a rectangular column of smoke rising straight up from the ME 109 shops, with only one burst over in the town of Regensburg.

The rest of the trip was a marked anti-climax. A few more fighters pecked at us on the way to the Alps. A town in the Brenner Pass tossed up a lone burst of futile flak. Colonel LeMay, who had taken excellent care of us all the way, circled the air division over Lake Garda long enough to give the cripples a chance to join the family, and we were on our way toward the Mediterranean in ~~highaltitude~~ a gradual descent. About twenty five (25) fighters on the ground at Verona stayed on the ground. The prospect of ditching as we approached Rome, short of fuel, and the sight of other B-17's falling into the drink, seemed trivial matters after the vicious nightmare of the long trip across southern Germany. We felt the reaction of men who had not expected to see another sunset.

At 1815 hours, with red lights showing on all our fuel tanks in my ship, the seven B-17's out of the group who were still in formation circled over Bertoux and landed in the dust. Our crew was unscratched. Sole damage to the airplane; a bit of ventilation around the tail from flak and 20 mm shells. We slept on the hard ground under the wings of our B-17, but the good earth felt softer than a silk pillow.







Major Gale W. Cleven, leader of the low Squadron. Throughout approximately two hours of constant fighter attack, Major Cleven's Squadron was the principal focal point of the enemy's fire. Early in the encounter, south of Antwerp, he lost his entire second element of three B-17's, yet maintained his vulnerable and exposed position in the formation rigidly in order to keep his guns uncovered.

Approximately 30 minutes before reaching the target his airplane received the following battle damage. A 20 mm cannon shell penetrated the right side of the airplane and exploded beneath the pilot, damaging the electrical system and injuring the top turret gunner in the leg. A second 20 mm shell entered the radio compartment, killing the radio operator, who bled to death with his legs severed above the knees. A third 20 mm shell entered the left side of the nose, tearing out a section of plexiglass about two feet square, tore away the right hand nose gun installation and injured the bombardier in the head and shoulder. A fourth 20 mm shell penetrated the right wing into the fuselage and shattered and the hydraulic system, releasing fluid all around the cockpit. A fifth 20 mm shell entered the cabin roof and severed the rudder cables to one side of the rudder. A sixth 20 mm cannon shell exploded in the No. 3 engine, destroying all engine controls. The engine caught fire and lost its power, but the fire eventually died out.

Confronted with structural damage, partial loss of control, fire in the air and serious injuries to personnel, and faced with fresh waves of fighters still rising to the attack, Major Cleven had every justification for abandoning ship. His crew, some of the comparatively inexperienced youngsters, were preparing to bail out, since no other course appeared open. The copilot pleaded repeatedly with Major Cleven to abandon ship. Major Cleven's reply at this critical juncture, although the odds were overwhelmingly against him, was as follows: "You son of a bitch. You sit there and take it." These strong words were heard over the interphone and had a magical effect on the crew. They stuck to their guns. The airplane continued to the target, bombed it and reached base in North Africa.

Sgt Ferroggiaro, left waist gunner and veteran of the war in China in 1932 and of seven (7) months at the front in Spain in 1938, voiced the opinion of the crew to the undersigned when he stated that the completion of the mission was solely due to the extraordinary heroism and inspired determination of Major Cleven. The undersigned believes that under the circumstances which obtained, Major Cleven's actions were far above and beyond the call of duty, and that the skill, courage and strength of will displayed by him as airplane and squadron commander in the face of hopeless odds have since seldom, if ever, been surpassed in the annals of the Army Air Forces.

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